



The United States Attorney's Office

## Central District of California



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Release No. 07-005

January 17, 2007

### **JAPANESE MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO CHARGES RELATED TO SMUGGLING OF PROTECTED AND ENDANGERED BUTTERFLIES**

**Los Angeles, CA** - A man from Kyoto, Japan has pleaded guilty to federal charges of trafficking in rare and protected butterfly species in violation of United States laws and an international treaty that protects endangered species.

Hisayoshi Kojima, 57, pleaded guilty yesterday to 17 felony charges related to the sale and smuggling of several butterfly species that he illegally brought into the United States.

Kojima pleaded guilty to all 17 charges contained in an indictment returned last summer by a federal grand jury in Los Angeles. Pleading guilty yesterday, Kojima admitted, among other things, that he smuggled into the United States a pair of Queen Alexandra's birdwings, an endangered species that is the largest butterfly in the world.

Additionally, Kojima smuggled another pair of *Ornithoptera alexandrae* butterflies into the United States by means of fraudulent documents. Specifically, Kojima submitted a fraudulent Express Mail Service customs declaration that described a shipment as a gift of "dry butterfly" worth \$30, when in fact it consisted of two Queen Alexandra's birdwings that had been sold for \$8,500.

Kojima offered for sale the endangered Giant Swallowtail butterfly, an endangered species from Jamaica. The Giant Swallowtail butterfly, *Papilio homerus*, is the largest butterfly in the western hemisphere and is depicted on the \$1,000 Jamaican banknote.

Kojima smuggled other protected and endangered butterfly species into the United States. All of the species involved in the case are protected by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, and most are protected by the federal Endangered Species Act.

Kojima pleaded guilty to five counts of Illegally offering to sell endangered species, five counts of importing wildlife contrary to law, five counts of smuggling wildlife and two counts of illegally importing endangered species.

Kojima pleaded guilty before United States District Judge George P. Schiavelli, who is scheduled to sentence the defendant on April 19. The 17 counts carry a statutory maximum penalty of 57 years in federal prison. A plea agreement in the case contemplates a sentence of between 18 months and two years in prison, a term that is not binding on Judge Schiavelli. However, if Kojima pays a fine and

restitution totaling \$37,656 prior to sentencing, the government has agreed to recommend a sentence of 15 months in prison.

This case is the result of a three-year investigation by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Office of Law Enforcement.

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